

WHY VOUCHERS ARE NOT FOR UTAH

| Vouchers are More About Subsidies and Less About Choice

Parents may choose to send their children to any public school in the local District without charge. They can also choose a private school. The issue isn't about choice, it's about whether taxpayers should subsidize existing private schools and encourage emergence of new subsidized private schools without adequate assurance of quality or accountability. Utah can't afford where that path leads.

| Utah's Schools Deserve Continuing Support

Utah spends the least per-pupil, yet Utah's public schools are leaders in performance. Utah is in the top 10 in graduation and one of only 7 to receive an "A" grade in preparing students for college. Most Utahns want increased investment in what works in classrooms - quality teachers, smaller classes and high expectations for all students. The last thing Utah's schools need is a liberal subsidized entitlement program that competes for scarce resources.

| Vouchers Will Cost Taxpayers and Injure Some Public Schools

Legislative Research projects that vouchers will cost Utah taxpayers \$429 million over the next 13 years as the students in existing private schools qualify for the subsidy. This education money will not go to public schools. To the contrary, after five years, public school funding will be reduced to reflect transfers to private schools regardless of the ability of impacted schools to reduce fixed costs. Depending upon enrollment patterns, some public schools would simply have to do more with less.

| Utah Shouldn't be the Nation's Guinea Pig

Voucher advocates are trumpeting Utah's proposed law as the "nation's first statewide universal voucher bill." Vouchers have been adopted only in a few states primarily for the benefit of the disadvantaged or those with special needs. Utah's voucher bill contains no such limitation. It subsidizes persons with income exceeding \$100,000. Utah, with its conservative values, should not lead the nation in this experiment in social engineering.

| Vouchers Could Become Tools for Cultural Division

Voucher proponents foresee development of many and varied types of private schools. They share a common design to divide from the main stream. Private schools will naturally arise from perceived academic

superiority, social or economic status, religious preferences, lifestyle or political philosophy, undesirable student mix, or a desire to be more exclusive. Such schools have always existed, but not at taxpayer expense. During the last half century we have reduced segregation and enhanced equal opportunity in public schools. We should not embrace a system that could reverse what we have worked hard to achieve.

| The Voucher Bill has Constitutional Problems

Utah has many excellent and valued parochial schools at every education level. They all depend on private funding. This is consistent with Utah's unique history and its Constitution which expressly prohibits direct public funding of church-sponsored schools. House Bill 148 adopts a legally questionable scheme to funnel money to these schools. Vouchers are made payable to parents, but mailed directly to the parochial schools for deposit in their bank accounts. This invites a costly and divisive court battle.